

LONDON LIFE

Irving's Latest Success as a Shylock.

MISS THURSBY'S FAREWELL.

A French Painter Immortalizing a Zulu Fight.

LONDON, Nov. 4, 1879. First nights at the Lyceum are now part and parcel of London life. No one who has any sympathy with art and literature is absent if he can help it; but the Lyceum is not large enough to hold a fifth part of those who want to get inside it on the occasion of a new addition to the series of revivals which Mr. Irving has already presented to his audiences. The "Flying Dutchman" and the "Iron Chest" were either real failures or "caviare to the general"; for many of Mr. Irving's admirers will not admit the possibility of failure in anything he undertakes. The announcement that the "Merchant of Venice" would be produced at the Lyceum naturally caused much enthusiasm, for it was admitted on all hands that Shylock was quite in Mr. Irving's line, and it was confidently foretold that even his Richard III. and Louis XI. would be as nothing compared with his Shylock. To judge from the theatrical world the prophecy must be true, for never did the walls of a theatre contain such an enthusiastic multitude as was packed into the Lyceum last Saturday night. Mr. Irving and Miss Terry were not applauded merely; they were cheered in a most startling manner. The foreigner who has heard that English audiences are cold and unresponsive would have been astounded at the scenes that took place before the curtain. That there would be an immense "house" was taken for granted, and Mr. Irving had had circulars printed to accompany the tickets given to the press, in which he requested that if the ticket was not wanted it should be returned, as the "pressure for places had been so unduly great that he would deem any assistance in the difficulty as a personal favor."

THE CURTAIN RISES. There was an absolute applause when the curtain rose, as such a thing is not to be expected at the front of the dog's palace, with the two columns of the proscenium. On the left of the spectator a trading felucca lay at the quay; the sailors were carrying quaint looking boxes of merchandise ashore, while others loaded about making purchases and bargaining with the landmen. Presently, when Antonio, the merchant, and his companions came on to the scene in costumes which gave them one and all the appearance of having stepped out of old pictures, the realism and brightness of the scene were perfect. When Mr. Irving came on there ensued a prolonged burst of applause which stopped the play for several minutes, during which his appearance and make-up could be keenly examined. A grave, pale man, with thin, long grizzled beard and hair, clad in a garb of brown, and black pouch at side, and staff in hand, with quick, restless eyes and ever moving eyebrows. Such was the new Shylock which London has so impatiently wished to see. The first scene was not half ended before the Lyceum had come home to every one present that Shakespeare's wonderful creation was in the hands of a master and would not suffer. As the play went on and the mingled dignity and cupidity of the Jew were brought out with astonishing ease and power until the climax, when the sudden frustration of his scheme of revenge left him exhausted and nerveless with despair but full of stately dignity still, the audience evidently recognized the fulfillment of its most hopeful anticipations. In the scene of the trial Mr. Irving's bearing was that of a man who "stood there for law"—calm, upright, severe, save when the allusions to the bond and Antonio called forth the fierce words of hate and revenge. The "business" of this scene has never been equalled on the English stage for thoroughness and interest.

AN ENTHUSIASTIC AUDIENCE. Mr. Irving makes a fine point when the frivolous Gratiano has given utterance to his last brutal jest. He slowly turns his face toward his tormentor, his eyes being fixed on the ground; then, slowly and contemptuously, commencing at his very feet, the eyes are raised until they meet those of the gay young gallant in a look of mingled hate and scorn. Swiftly the look dies out, and the old man, heaving a deep sigh, totters out of the court. Presently you hear three loud jeering cries from the mob outside as the Jew makes his way into the street. The whole of this marvellous and exciting scene is presented with a power and completeness which positively make one think that so long as such things are done, the Lyceum will continue to be a success in England there is not so much need after all of a national theatre. As for Miss Terry's Portia, it is an impersonation about which English players fairly rave. "Matchless!" "Perfect!" "Lovely!" "Delightful!" "Unrivalled at any period!" are the expressions of approval which at once break forth when the subject is mentioned. I am bound to say that a visit to the Lyceum proves them to be justified so far as the Portia of the Lyceum is concerned. All that is charming and tender and graceful in woman is concentrated in Miss Terry's Portia and she is so full of the spirit of the part that she is able to show some of the prettiest comedy conceivable as in the badinage with her maid about her suitors and the former being a most agreeable and pleasant when she propounds her plan for the doing of male attire. For the scene of the choosing of the caskets was managed with the greatest skill, and the picture which has been presented there at which the Lyceum affords means has been a success. The Lyceum has been a success in London, while Portia follows his every movement and with eager anxiety, soft music heard behind the while—

Let music sound while he doth make his choice;—
Then, if he love, he makes a woe-like end,
Fading in music.

I have dwelt long upon this very important dramatic event because any letter writer now purporting to give a reflection of London life which did not take full notice of it would miss a thoroughly characteristic incident of the city. The Lyceum has been the extraordinary development of dramatic enthusiasm, as a proof of which I may mention that the new edition of the "Stage" has published last week, 40,000 copies were sold in two days.

RENOUDED AT DEBUT LANE. George Rigold, who has been in New York and the United States, but so long an absentee from London that he has been well nigh forgotten here, made his public reappearance last night at the Lyceum. Though Rigold is little known "Henry V." is a more or less familiar spectacle. Calvert put it on the stage with great magnificence a few years ago, and Coleman was recently produced at the Lyceum. But Rigold's arrangement is superior to both of the other presentations. The audience which attended last night was very large and very enthusiastic. About his performance it would be impossible to say anything but that he did not know any. He seemed to be a student of the Lyceum at both Theatre he first stormed Harcourt and fought on the field of Agincourt. It is said—whether by critics who are intentionally hostile or not—that Rigold does not expect to make money during this engagement; expects, in fact, to lose, and only desires to show his friends and the remembrance of those who may have forgotten him. He has taken Drury Lane until Christmas, and if his audience continue to be as large as the first night he will be successful.

MISS THURSBY'S FAREWELL. Miss Emma Thurbury, whose voice has been winning its way to many English hearts, is about to return to America. Last night she was given a benefit at Riviere's Covent Garden Promenade Concerts. The stalls and boxes were filled with curious and American flags fluttered in various parts of the auditorium. The audience was large and the concert one of the most interesting of the series. All the singers were English, however, save Miss Thurbury and Mr. Carlton, the latter of whom sang very finely the tondor's song from "Carmen," in which he is now playing with great success at the Lyceum. Miss Thurbury was, of course, the favorite of the evening, and she was encircled with enthusiasm and was the recipient of many flowers. At eleven o'clock the Lyceum was closed and the audience was taken to a famous little hotel near the Haymarket, where a sumptuous supper had been prepared in compliment to the Lyceum. The Lyceum was closed at seven o'clock, and it was very late when they arose. Among those present were Mr. Conway, Bronson Howard, Mr. Henry F. Gilling, of the American Exchange, Mr. Carlton, Colonel W. H. Reynolds, Grace Greenwood, Mr. Mapleson and E. J. Garrett. Mr. Henry F. Gilling, of the American Exchange, was the master of ceremonies. The health of Miss Thurbury was proposed by Mr. Hatton, who said that in his opinion she was the greatest singer he had ever heard in England. He expressed his admiration of Miss Thurbury and of the many American singers who had filled the Lyceum and the Lyceum stage. Mr. Conway, replying to the toast, said he would

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THE RUSSIAN DEFEAT. The Russian defeat at the battle of Geok Tepe, in which the Tekke Trocians fought a heroic battle, is thus described by a correspondent of the *Nouvelles de St. Petersburg*. It is the only graphic account of the battle, which has yet appeared. "On the 19th-21st August," says the correspondent, "a council of war was held, composed of the Commander-in-Chief, General Lomakin; the chief of the infantry, Major General Borzh; the head of the cavalry, Prince Witgenstein; the commander of the advance guard, Colonel Prince Dolgorouki; the chief of the staff, Colonel Malanin, and several other officers, and a decision was arrived at to penetrate the Benin delio, to invade the Tekke oasis and to conquer the Turcoman inhabitants. In spite of the transport and food supply being in a far from brilliant condition it was recognized that there was a chance of striking a crushing blow against the Tekkes, all of whom had left their fortified encampments and collected at two points, at Dengli Tepe, in number 20,000 warriors, and at Akabat in a body of as many more. It was calculated that a general engagement might place them under subjection for ever to Russian rule. This determination of the Council of War led to the troops being ordered forward. On the 22d August (old style) a church parade was held and a mass performed in memory of General Lazoff. Although the troops, not having slept all night, were fatigued, their spirit was nevertheless excellent, and they advanced singing and playing impromptu Russian airs, one of them being about the Tekkes, and beginning, 'Ah, you rascals, the Turks have thrashed, and now we come to pay you out also.' The officers discussed the fighting of the Tekkes in groups, examined plans, and talking of Akabat, some of them thought about going themselves in to the Turcoman Mecca. We marched in full Afghan order in a square, with the 'waggon' or *lajgar* at the corner. When four and one-half miles from the starting place we received a despatch from the staff that the Tekkes were showing themselves in large numbers. General Joly! Songs were sung, shouts were raised, rifles were examined and revolvers loaded. The commander of the column thought it necessary to feel the enemy, and 120 Cossacks and 120 Samata horse were sent in front. The Tekkes, galloping on their swift horses like lightning, swept them back, and the latter, returning, led the enemy upon the infantry. The daring of the nomads induced them at 1,300 paces to surround the laager. In order to seize it, but the artillery and rifle fire drove them away with easy killing.

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THE RUSSIAN DEFEAT

How the Tekke Trocians Fight.

THE GEOTEPE AFFAIR.

Heroic Nomads on the Warpath.

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